

When Speaker John Boehner took the gavel from Nancy Pelosi in January, he threw down the gauntlet; issuing a direct challenge to Congress' unsustainable deficit spending addiction. Joined by a new conservative House majority sent to Washington with orders to reform government and reduce federal spending, he has kept his word to push spending cuts to the forefront of Washington's agenda.

No one said reversing course on decades of free spending by both parties would be easy. Just the opposite.

The battle that has ensued has further divided Congress and set up a showdown with the White House.

In the background is the continuing drumbeat of a looming federal government shutdown.

The pressure is high and so are the stakes.

Taken in the context of the overall \$1.6 trillion federal budget deficit, Speaker Boehner's plan to cut current federal spending by \$61 billion compared to 2010 levels, and by over \$100 billion compared to President Obama's 2011 budget request, is a modest first step. Yet, judging from the outcry of Congressional democrats and the White House, making fiscally responsible decisions doesn't seem to matter.

They don't want any substantial cuts at all.

On February 19, the House – making good on our "Pledge to America" promise – passed HR 1,

a measure to effectively reduce federal spending this year by \$100 billion overall, including \$61 billion in direct cuts. Last Thursday, the liberal-controlled Senate rejected it as too extreme. President Obama also threatened to veto HR 1 if it reached his desk.

To illustrate the philosophical gulf that separates Congress, last week Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, railed against the House Republican spending cuts, lamenting that they would even target funding for his state's annual cowboy poetry festival. With a \$14 trillion national debt threatening our country's financial solvency, I suspect any Nevada cowboy worth his salt would be willing to forego federal support for a poetry festival to save the herd.

Back in Washington, we have simultaneous budget battles being waged. The push to pass the \$100 billion in reduced spending this year is getting the most attention, while a secondary front has formed as conservatives push a series of temporary government funding bills that cut spending incrementally.

Two weeks ago, we passed a stop-gap spending bill to keep the federal government operating through March 18 while also cutting \$4 billion.

This week, we are prepared to pass another multi-week spending bill which chops another \$6 billion.

Speaker Boehner has made clear we will continue to fight for \$100 billion in lower spending this year – whether it comes all at once, as in the case of HR 1, or done week-to-week by stop-gap measures. The bottom line is the same.

The president and his followers in Congress would have us believe the national debt – now equal to \$127,500 for each American taxpayer – is a necessary evil that can simply be ignored. |
t cannot.

It serves as a tremendous weight on our already fragile economy, threatening jobs and our future quality of life.

Our economy will not recover if government keeps spending our country into a hole.

Time for an “American” Energy Policy:

The current Middle East political turmoil, which has dramatically boiled over in Libya, has brought home the impact of America’s continued lack of a comprehensive energy policy.

The rise in oil and gas prices has dealt Americans a painful blow at a time when spending money remains in short supply. South Alabama pump prices average \$3.45 for regular and they are likely to increase with the arrival of summer.

Meanwhile, the president has been slow to react to the gas price rise, just as he's been slow to react to calls for a resumption of safe deepwater oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. His drilling ban alone has cost an estimated 12,000 jobs and led to an exodus of drilling rigs from the Gulf to other countries.

Last week, Speaker Boehner announced that the House will once again try to pass our all-of-the-above energy plan – called the American Energy Initiative – which draws on all available domestic resources, including tapping oil and gas along our shores and in Alaska, to help meet our growing energy needs.

An end to the de facto drilling moratorium in the Gulf, combined with a policy that taps our natural gas, coal and nuclear potential as well as hydropower, geothermal, wind and solar energy, is the best strategy to meet our long-term energy demands. Not only would it provide more jobs at home, it would also help insulate Americans from the whims of a volatile world energy market.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.